

House Democrats Advance Legislative Priorities Important to the American People

Since the 117th Congress began, House Democrats have taken action to advance a number of bills that address issues critically important to the American people. These broadly popular bills include a range of priorities: helping our nation respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, cleaning up corruption and making government more responsive to the American people, promoting equality, strengthening unions and protecting the right to bargain collectively, improving the relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and more. Here's a look at major legislation passed through the House:

THE NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP ACT

A major part of House Democrat's Make It In America plan, the National Apprenticeship Act passed the House on February 5. This bill would provide nearly one million new apprenticeship opportunities, save taxpayers by having to spend less on unemployment programs, and update the original National Apprenticeship Act to meet twenty-first century standards.

Real Clear Education: [The National Apprenticeship Act: a Win-Win for America](#)

"In today's rancorous political environment, it's not easy to find legislative proposals with support from both sides of the political aisle, but on February 5, in a bipartisan vote – 219 Democrats and 28 Republicans – the House of Representatives passed the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021, sending it to the Senate for approval. If it becomes law, the Act would invest more than \$3.5 billion over the next five years to create nearly 1 million new apprenticeship opportunities. It would also yield a projected \$10.6 billion in benefits, including increased tax revenue, boosted employee productivity, and lowered spending on public-assistance programs and unemployment insurance."

"Interest groups endorsing the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021 include labor organizations such as the AFL-CIO and International Brotherhood of Teamsters; business associations and companies, such as the Manufacturing Institute and IBM; educational associations, including the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association for Career and Technical Education; and local government organizations, from the National League of Cities to the United States Conference of Mayors."

Brookings: [Apprenticeships are an overlooked solution for creating more access to quality jobs](#)

"One of these holistic solutions is to adapt apprenticeship for today's economy and make it a more integral part of our education and training ecosystem in order to increase access to quality jobs, especially for young people—a group that has suffered the greatest job losses in the current recession...Reauthorizing the 1937 National Apprenticeship Act would be a critical step toward systems change."

H.R. 5, THE EQUALITY ACT

One of the first items to be considered by the 117th Congress, H.R. 5, the Equality Act, was passed with unanimous support from House Democrats on February 25. The Equality Act would ensure LGBTQ Americans are guaranteed the full protections of federal civil rights laws and extends anti-discrimination protections to LGBTQ Americans with regard to employment, education, access to credit, jury service, federal funding, housing, and public housing.

The Equality Act reflects the priorities of the American people; polling from [PRRI](#) found that 72% of Americans support equal protections for LGBTQ Americans.

CNN: [House passes Equality Act aimed at ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#)

“The House has passed the Equality Act, which would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to protect people from being discriminated based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing and other services as well as access to public accommodations such as restaurants. The final vote was 224-206. Three Republicans joined Democrats in voting for the bill...Advocates for the LGTBQ community argue the legislation will help protect people in states where it's legal to discriminate people and add the law is long overdue.”

Washington Blade: [House passes Equality Act](#)

“This is a defining moment in our nation’s political history and soon U.S. senators will decide their legacy on equality for LGBTQ people,” said LGBTQ Victory Institute President Annise Parker in a statement. ‘History is not kind to those who oppose or filibuster civil rights legislation and excuses won’t pass muster with future generations.’”

PROTECTING AMERICA’S WILDERNESS AND PUBLIC LANDS ACT

House Democrats remain committed to ensuring the protection of our public lands for generations to come. On February 26, the House passed a major conservation package that will designate 1.5 million acres of land as wilderness.

AP: [House Democrats move to protect more public lands, pass bill that would create about 1.5 million acres of new wilderness](#)

“The House passed legislation Friday that would create about 1.5 million acres of new wilderness and incorporate nearly 1,200 miles of waterways into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as Democrats move to protect more public lands — with President Joe Biden’s blessing.

“Biden has set a goal of conserving at least 30% of U.S. lands and ocean by 2030, a move that supporters say will help curb global warming while preserving some of the nation’s most scenic lands for future generations of Americans to enjoy... **Lands designated as wilderness receive the government’s highest level of protection and are generally off limits to motorized vehicles with allowed activities focused on recreation such as hiking, camping and horseback riding.”**

The Hill: [House passes major public lands package](#)

“The House on Friday passed a sprawling conservation bill 227-200 aimed at preserving land and water in Arizona, Colorado, California and Washington state....The bill aims to provide extra protection to about 1.5 million acres of public lands by designating them as wilderness. It would also prevent new oil, gas and mineral extraction on more than 1.2 million acres of public land and preserve 1,000 river miles by adding them to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.”

H.R. 1, THE FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

House Democrats believe that democracy should work for the people, and with passage of H.R. 1, Democrats are working to ensure that our government is truly accountable to the people it serves. H.R. 1 passed the House on March 3; this bill will strengthen access to the ballot box and make it easier for Americans to vote, put in place national redistricting reform, end the influence of dark money in politics, and strengthen election security to safeguard our elections.

H.R.1 is [supported by more than two-thirds of voters, or 68%](#), and [7 in 10 Americans support its provision to disclose large donors, ban misinformation, and expand early voting.](#)

CNN: [House passes sweeping election bill that would counter GOP efforts to restrict voter access](#)

“The Democratic-led House on Wednesday approved HR 1, a sweeping government, ethics and election bill that, among other things, would counter state-level Republican efforts to restrict voting access.”

NBC News: [Democrats rethink the U.S. voting system. What's in the massive H.R. 1.](#)

“House Democrats' top legislative priority — the H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2021 — is 791 pages of big election changes. The legislation...rethinks the entire voting process: how people register to vote, how ballots are cast and how states conduct elections. The goal is to improve access, particularly for voters of color. The bill would also create public financing systems for campaigns and ethics rules for candidates.

“‘This is the next great civil rights bill,’ said Elizabeth Hira, an attorney at the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, who helped craft the bill in her previous job with the House of Representatives.”

THE GEORGE FLOYD JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT

Last summer, House Democrats passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act after the killing of George Floyd sparked a movement across the country to confront systemic racism. Unfortunately, the Republican-led Senate refused to consider the bill. On March 3, House Democrats once again passed this bill to address racial bias in policing, ensure accountability for police brutality and misconduct, and work to change the culture of law enforcement to promote better relationships with the communities they serve.

Provisions in the Justice in Policing Act have broad support. [Three in 4 voters back a ban on racial profiling and chokeholds, including 55% and 58% of Republicans, respectively.](#)

NPR: [House Approves Police Reform Bill Named After George Floyd](#)

“House lawmakers on Wednesday passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, **a reform bill that would ban chokeholds and alter so-called qualified immunity for law enforcement, which would make it easier to pursue claims of police misconduct...** The wide-ranging legislation would also ban no-knock warrants in certain cases, mandate data collection on police encounters, prohibit racial and religious profiling and redirect funding to community-based policing programs.”

VOX: [The House has passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act](#)

“The House of Representatives on Wednesday passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Bill of 2021 — **legislation that Democratic lawmakers believe will reduce police violence against people of color, particularly Black Americans, while also improving policing for everyone.**”

“Broadly, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 tries to do four things at the federal level: **make the prosecution of police misconduct easier, expand federal oversight into local police units, limit bias among officers, and change policing tactics.** The bill works to encourage state and local governments to adopt its federal reforms through penalties — those that don’t make changes, or that refuse to comply with the bill’s data submission requirements, would lose access to federal policing funding, and in some cases, that funding would be redistributed to those departments that do cooperate.”

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Delivering on a critical promise to the American people, House Democrats worked with the Biden Administration to secure emergency relief to struggling Americans by passing the American Rescue Plan through the House on February 27, before passing the final version on March 10. This law will help bring this pandemic to an end, help keep families and small businesses from falling through the cracks as the economy comes back, and lift millions into the middle class by cutting child poverty in half. The American Rescue Plan enjoys continued support from the American people. Recent polling from Morning Consult [shows 77% of all voters and 59% of Republicans back the law.](#)

New York Times: [Congress Clears \\$1.9 Trillion Aid Bill, Sending It to Biden](#)

“Congress gave final approval on Wednesday to President Biden’s sweeping, nearly \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, as Democrats acted over unified Republican opposition to push through an emergency pandemic aid plan that carries out a vast expansion of the country’s **social safety net.** By a vote of 220 to 211, the House sent the measure to Mr. Biden for his signature, **cementing one of the largest injections of federal aid since the Great Depression...** The bill is estimated to slash poverty by a third this year and potentially cut child poverty in half, with expansions of tax credits, food aid and rental and mortgage assistance.”

Washington Post: [Congress adopts \\$1.9 trillion stimulus, securing first major win for Biden](#)

“The 220-to-211 vote in the House of Representatives almost entirely along party lines sends to President Biden’s desk **one of the largest economic rescue packages in U.S. history, which Democrats had promised to pass as one of their first acts of governance after securing narrow but potent majorities in Washington during the 2020 presidential election.**”

“The bill, dubbed the American Rescue Plan, authorizes another round of stimulus payments up to \$1,400 for most Americans; extends additional, enhanced unemployment aid to millions still out of work; and makes major changes to the tax code to benefit families with children. It couples the new pandemic relief with what Democrats have come to describe as one of the most robust legislative responses to poverty in a generation, seeking to assist low-income families who struggled financially long before the coronavirus took root.”

THE PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE (PRO) ACT

On March 9, the House passed the Protecting the Right to Organize Act to protect workers' right to join a union; hold employers accountable for violating workers' rights; and secure free, fair and safe union elections.

[Provisions in the PRO Act enjoy up to 59 percent approval rating among Democrats, Independents and Republicans.](#)

USA Today: [House passes sweeping pro-union bill that would reform labor laws](#)

“In a win for the labor movement, the House on Tuesday passed legislation that would reform labor laws and give workers more power to organize after decades of setbacks to unions. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act, also known as the PRO Act, was previously passed by the House in early 2020 but the Senate, then under Republican control, failed to take it up...The bill includes provisions to expand the definition of employee for the purpose of allowing independent contractors to join unions, upend so-called ‘right-to-work’ laws by allowing bargaining agreements to require dues by all employees represented by the agreements, and prohibit certain anti-union actions by employers and retaliation toward workers who participate in organizing.”

NPR: [House Democrats Pass Bill That Would Protect Worker Organizing Efforts](#)

“House Democrats have approved a bill that would provide protections for workers trying to organize, a measure that is the labor movement’s single biggest legislative priority in this Congress....”

“Union leaders say the Protecting the Right to Organize Act — PRO Act — would finally begin to level a playing field they say is unfairly tilted toward big business and management, making union organizing drives and elections unreasonably difficult...‘The PRO Act would protect and empower workers to exercise our freedom to organize a bargain,’ Richard Trumka, the president of the AFL-CIO, told NPR in a recent interview. ‘It’s a game changer. If you really want to correct inequality in this country — wages and wealth inequality, opportunity and inequality of power — passing the PRO Act is absolutely essential to doing that.’”

LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE

House Democrats passed two pieces of gun legislation on March 11 – H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, and H.R. 1446, legislation to close the Charleston Loophole. These bills will help keep communities safer by preventing guns from being in the wrong hands and ending the dangerous Charleston Loophole that allowed the mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2015.

Polls have shown that the majority of Americans favor background checks on gun ownership. A poll conducted by Every Town shows that 93% of Americans support background checks on gun ownership, [including 64% of Republicans and 67 percent of gun owners](#). More recent polling indicates [84% of voters and 77% of Republicans support all gun buyers to going through a background check and 48% support closing the Charleston Loophole](#).

CBS News: [House approves gun control bills expanding background checks](#)

“The House approved on two bills that would expand background checks on firearm sales... **These are the first significant gun control measures passed by the House since President Biden took office**, after he promised to enact legislation strengthening background checks during the presidential campaign. **The Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021, H.R. 8, was approved with a vote of 227 to 203, with eight Republicans joining almost all Democrats in voting for the bill.** Introduced by Democratic Congressman Mike Thompson, H.R. 8 would establish background check requirements for gun sales between private parties, prohibiting transfers unless a licensed gun dealer, manufacturer or importer first takes possession of the firearm to conduct a background check.”

“**The second legislation considered by the House on Thursday is the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021, H.R. 1446.** The bill, introduced by House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, would close the so-called ‘Charleston loophole,’ which allows some gun sales to go through before background checks are completed. Under that loophole, Dylann Roof was able to purchase a firearm in 2015 which he then used to murder nine people at a historically Black church in South Carolina.”

CNN: [House sends guns background check bill to the Senate with bipartisan support](#)

“**The House of Representatives on Wednesday passed significant gun control legislation for the first time in more than two decades**, a move that Democrats hope will intensify a pressure campaign for a vote in the Senate... **The legislation also has the backing of a multitude of outside groups**, including the former congresswoman and gun control advocate Gabby Giffords, the Brady Campaign, Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action.”

“‘Today’s historic gun safety victory in Congress is a testament to courage,’ Giffords said in a statement after the passage of the bill. **‘When the days were darkest, when it looked like the gun lobby’s money and influence would forever silence any debate in Washington about stronger gun laws, courage shone through.’**”

**REMOVING THE ARBITRARY DEADLINE FOR RATIFICATION
OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT**

On March 17, House Democrats marked Women’s History Month by again passing legislation to remove the arbitrary deadline to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. In January 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to approve the amendment, which would enshrine women’s equality in our Constitution once and for all. If this resolution becomes law, this Amendment would become the 28th Amendment to the Constitution.

NBC News: [‘No expiration date on equality’: House passes bill to remove women’s rights ERA deadline](#)

“The House passed a resolution Wednesday to remove the deadline to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment — just weeks after a federal judge ruled that time had already run out. Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., said the passage of her joint resolution by a vote of 222-204 made it clear that **‘there can be no expiration date on equality.’**”

CNN: [House passes joint resolution to remove ERA deadline](#)

“The vote during Women’s History Month is a symbolic step reaffirming supporters’ commitment to the ERA – which they have fought for decades to add to the Constitution – given that the House approved the same resolution last session.”

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

On March 17, the House passed legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This legislation would build upon the original legislation by authorizing further resources to support victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. While the House passed a reauthorization last Congress, the Republican-led Senate refused to consider it.

CBS News: [House votes to reauthorize Violence Against Women Act](#)

“The House approved the reauthorization by a vote of 244 to 172, with 29 Republicans joining all Democrats in voting for it...VAWA enshrines legal protections for women who have experienced domestic and sexual violence. It was initially passed in 1994, championed by then-Senator Joe Biden, and was updated and reauthorized in 2000, 2005 and 2013. The bill expired at the end of 2018 due to a government shutdown and was briefly renewed by a resolution reopening the government, but expired again in February 2019.”

“The current bill would expand victims services and reauthorize grant programs for the criminal justice response to domestic and sexual violence... It would also close the so-called “boyfriend loophole” to prevent dating partners and stalkers convicted of domestic violence or abuse from purchasing and owning firearms.”

Washington Post: [House votes to reauthorize landmark Violence Against Women Act](#)

“The House voted on Wednesday to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, legislation originally authored by then-Sen. Joe Biden in 1994 that aims to strengthen protections for women from domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. The landmark law was reauthorized several times since, but lapsed in 2019 after the Democratic-controlled House voted to renew it, but it stalled in the Republican-led Senate... The vote was 244-to-172, with 29 Republicans breaking ranks and joining Democrats in backing the reauthorization.”

“The White House issued a statement this week supporting the bill, saying, ‘VAWA reauthorization is more urgent now than ever, especially when the pandemic and economic crisis have only further increased the risks of abuse and the barriers to safety for women in the United States.’”

H.R. 6, THE DREAM AND PROMISE ACT

House Democrats remain committed to fixing our nation’s broken immigration system. On March 18, the House passed H.R. 6, the Dream and Promise Act, to enable Dreamers and those holding TPS

and DED status to remain in the country they have long called home and where they contribute greatly to their local communities and economies.

[A recent poll conducted by Vox and Data for Progress found that 72% of likely voters](#) support legislation to provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.

CNBC: [America's biggest companies push for path to citizenship for 'Dreamers'](#)

"America's biggest companies urged Congress on Wednesday to establish a permanent path to citizenship for 'Dreamers' — undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children...Members of the Coalition for the American Dream and signatories of the letter represent every major industry in the country, including Facebook, General Motors, Marriott, Target, Visa and Uber."

MSNBC: [With protections for Dreamers, Dems create a new challenge for GOP](#)

"If approved, the bill would extend legal status and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as minors. This passed yesterday, 228 to 197, with nine House Republicans siding with the Democratic majority."

"Let's also note for historical context a detail that often goes overlooked: Republicans helped write the Dream Act. In the not-too-distant past, these protections for Dreamers were literally co-authored by leading GOP senators such as Orrin Hatch, John McCain, and Dick Lugar."

FARM WORKFORCE MODERNIZATION ACT

The broadly supported Farm Workforce Modernization Act will provide stability to America's agriculture industry by creating a pathway for agricultural workers to earn legal status and reforming the H-2A guestworker program. This legislation passed the House with bipartisan support on March 18.

CBS News: [House passes immigration bills with path to citizenship for "Dreamers" and farmworkers](#)

"By a vote of 247 to 174, the Democratic-led House also passed the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which would grant legal status to hundreds of thousands of farmworkers living in the U.S. without authorization...Eligible workers would be allowed to request green cards if they complete four or eight years of additional agricultural work, depending on whether they have performed such work for more than or less than 10 years."

Capital Press: [House sends Farm Workforce Modernization Act to Senate](#)

"The bill has garnered support from more than 300 organizations — including growers in Oregon. Dave Puglia, president and CEO of Western Growers, said the bill 'provides a thoughtful and pragmatic solution to agriculture's labor crisis, and addresses the co-equal goals of securing the existing workforce and ensuring a future flow of workers.'"

The 117th Congress has already been exceptionally productive, with House Democrats passing important legislation to improve the lives of American families. Democrats will continue to work expeditiously to address the most critical issues facing Americans.